

Story 931 (1977 Tape 23)

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Province

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Tale taped by Ahmet Ali Arslan

The Ordeal of the Padişah and His Lost Family

Once there was and once there was not a padişah.

One night this padişah had a dream in which an old man appeared to him and said, "Wake up! Wake up! Your house is on fire!" The following night he had the same dream, and this time when he woke up in the morning, his house really was on fire. The fire had burned so far into the house that there was not much that could then be done to stop it. The result was that they lost their entire home.

After their home had been destroyed in this way, the padişah took his wife and their two sons and moved to another village.¹ They walked and walked a long way before they found a village that they liked. The people of that village said to the padişah, "We need a herdsman in this village to tend our cows and other animals. You are a poor stranger who

¹The padişah figure appears in so many Turkish folktales that he may be used thoughtlessly by a poor narrator. A padişah was a king or sultan or ruler of some sort over a large group of people. He could hardly live in a village or be reduced to poverty by a house fire. It is quite incongruous that a house fire would reduce a padişah to the rank of cowherd in this way.

GREATLY
TELESCOPE D
BEGINNING
OF "Ordeal of"
L2 to f Sh24 -
Eustacius story

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probably needs work, and we should be glad to hire you to be our herdsman." He accepted their offer and began working at once as the village herdsman

In those days there used to be laundrymen who were willing to wash the clothes of others for pay. They did the laundry for many people in any village. One of these laundrymen came to that same village where the padişah and his family had settled. When he needed a helper to fold the clothes, the village people told him about the padişah's wife: "She and her husband are poor. They need money. They came to this village to find work, and this job would be quite suitable for the wife."

The laundryman hired the wife of the padişah as a folder of clothes. Her folding of clothes was so careful and exact--at times almost beautiful--that the laundryman was overwhelmed with admiration for the work she did. He thought, "If I had such a woman, at least half of my services would be performed almost perfectly." He decided that he would like to take a look at his folder of clothes, but she never came into view. She remained within the house and never showed her face to a stranger. He left the laundry to be folded by her door, and when she had finished her work, she left the folded clothes by the door again. But the next time he came for the folded clothes he deliberately arrived a little early. As the

Abduction
(Kidnapping)

padişah's wife set the basket of clothes by the door, he grasped her wrist with all his strength, pulled her out of the house, and abducted her.

When the padişah returned that evening from herding cows, he could not find his wife anywhere in their house. He asked his two sons, "Where is your mother?" They told him in the best way they could what had happened, how the laundryman had taken their crying mother away.

When the padişah could not find either his wife or the laundryman anywhere in that village, he felt so disgraced that he could not bear to live there any longer. Accordingly, he packed his few belongings, took his two sons by the hand, and started walking in search of another village where they could live. When they came to a small river, the padişah carried one of the boys across the river on his back and placed him on the opposite bank. Then he returned to get the second boy. As he was about halfway across with the second child, he saw a ⁹⁶⁻⁹⁷wolf come along, pick up the first boy in its teeth, and start running away with him. Forgetting the boy on his back for the moment, he made several sudden leaps to reach the bank to rescue his son from the wolf. As he did so, the child on his back fell off into the water and was carried away by the swift current. Unable to catch the wolf, he realized that he had

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lost both his sons--one to the wolf and the other to the river. --Now we shall leave the poor father in his confusion see what happened to his sons

The boy who had fallen into the water was carried downstream by the current until he came to a mill where a had been built across the river. Washed up on this dam, he clung to the top of it. We shall leave him there for a while.

While the other boy, crying loudly, was being carried away in the jaws of the wolf, some farmers working on the land saw what was happening. They chased the wolf, attacked and forced it to drop the child from its mouth. One of farmers said, "I do not have any children. I shall take this boy home and adopt him." No one objected to this, and so the farmer carried the boy to his house.

In the meantime, the ⁹⁷⁻⁹⁸miller became curious about why so little water came over the dam to turn his mill wheel. When he went outside to look, he saw the boy stuck on top of the dam and understood then why his mill was receiving so little water. He saved the boy and took him home with saying, "Since I have no children, I shall make this boy my son."

After this boy had grown some, he got into a fight one day with some of his playmates. One of his angry friends

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said to him, "You are nothing but a foundling! You have no father or mother!"

Very hurt and sad, the boy began to cry. "Why do you say such mean things to me? Of course I have a father or mother!"

"No, the miller and his wife are not your father and mother," they said

Very confused, the boy went home and said, "Mother, take out your breast, for I want to be nursed."

His mother said, "What a thing to say! Son, you are a big boy now and can no longer be nursed!"

But the boy insisted in his demand: "No, take your breast out," and he caught his mother's breast in his strong teeth. Between his teeth he said, "Now tell me about my real father and mother!"

The helpless woman said, "Oh, my poor child, we do not know anything about your mother and father. We found you on the mill dam."

Saying, "I shall go and find my real mother and father," the boy ran away from home. As he was walking about quite aimlessly, he met the boy who had been carried away by the wolf. They had been apart long enough by then so that they did not recognize each other as brothers. The one asked, "Where are you going?"

Quest
for parents

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"I am going somewhere to get a job. Where are you going?"

"I am also looking for a job

Now let us leave them there together and turn to their father, the padişah. He walked and walked before he came to another village. Because their padişah had passed away, the citizens were ready to choose a new one. They had an odd way of selecting their padişahs in that village. Actually, the people did not make the selection; it was made by a special bird.² At the time a new padişah was needed, they would let this bird loose. The person on whose head this bird landed became the new padişah.

The former padişah who had lost his whole family arrived in this village just as the election bird was about to be released. He was so tired that he sat all slumped down on a street corner, not paying any attention to what was going on around him. When the election bird was released, it circled the crowd gathered for the occasion and landed on the head of the weary traveler. When the

² The reference here is to the Talih kuşu, the Bird of Fortune. In Turkish folktales many a ruler is chosen by the Bird of Fortune, so many, in fact, that it is sometimes referred to as Devlet Kuşu, the State Bird. Even apart from folktales, the Bird of Fortune has been incorporated into Turkish thought and language. Thus, if one has a stroke of entirely unexpected good luck, one would be likely to say, "The Bird of Fortune must have landed on my head!"

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villagers looked and saw that the bird had landed on the head of a stranger with old and ragged clothes, they became greatly annoyed with him. "You cannot become our padişah!" they shouted, and they shoved him into the goose barn to get him out of the way.

But when the election bird was released a second time, it flew around until it located him in the goose barn. It then flew inside the barn and landed on his head again. There could be no mistaking the bird's choice now, and so the people could no longer reject the ragged stranger. They made him their padişah. As you know, he had been a padişah before, too

two boys seeking jobs walked along together without knowing either where they were going or even in what direction they were going. It was purely by accident that they arrived in the same village where their father had just been chosen padişah. The boys went to the palace and asked for work. As soon as the padişah saw these two boys, he felt a sudden rush of sympathy for them. Very favorably impressed by their looks, he hired both of them as watchmen.

Time continued, time passed--one day, two days, three days. Then one day the laundryman arrived in that same village. He was still taking with him everywhere he went the poor woman whom he had abducted.

Greatly
telegraphed

Black sympathy

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None of the people we have been telling about recognized each other. The two boys did not know that they were brothers. They did not know that the padişah was their father, nor did they know that the laundryman's helper was their mother. And the padişah was quite unaware that his wife and children were there in the village that he now ruled.

Before they had been there very long, the padişah and the laundryman had become good friends. One day the laundryman went to visit the padişah, leaving the woman at the tent in which they lived. But when the laundryman was ready to leave, the padişah insisted that he remain a while longer. The laundryman then said, "O my great Padişah, my wife is alone in our tent. I really ought to go lest she become frightened."

"Don't worry about that," said the padişah. "I have a couple of unusually trustworthy men, and I shall send them to protect your wife." He then sent his two sons, still not knowing, of course, who they were

The two boys went to the laundryman's tent and began to stand watch before its door. Kept there on duty for quite a long while, one of them finally said to the other, "Although we have now known each other for quite some time, we have never told each other our life stories."

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The younger of the two said, "First you tell your life story, and then I shall tell mine."

The older boy then began to tell his life story. As he did so, the woman inside the tent pricked up her ears and listened. The boy said, "My father was a padişah. One day our home burned down and we had to move to another village. At that time I had a mother and I had a younger brother. My father became a herdsman in the new village to which we went. One day an evil laundryman abducted my mother. My father was so sad and so disgraced by this that we had to move again. As we were traveling along looking for another village, a wolf . .

The younger boy interrupted him, crying out, "Oh, my God! Your life story is the same as mine--exactly the same! By God, you are my brother!"

The two boys embraced each other in excitement and kissed each other on both cheeks. And when the woman inside the tent had heard all that had been said, she realized that these boys were her sons. Opening the tent door, she said to them, "I am your mother!"

The woman and the boys now embraced each other and kissed each other. They then talked excitedly for so long that they grew exhausted and fell asleep. As they did so, the mother was holding her sons' heads in her lap, with her arms around them.

When the laundryman returned and saw how the padişah's two watchmen were sleeping with his wife's arms around them, he became very angry. He returned to the palace and reported to the padişah what he had seen in his tent. The padişah immediately sent his executioner to the tent with orders to bring to the palace the woman and the two guards. When the executioner brought the three to the presence of the padişah, the ruler looked at the two boys and asked, "Why did you ever do such an evil thing?"

The older boy took a chair and sat on it. Everyone was there now, including the laundryman. The older boy began to talk. "My great Padişah, my father was also a padişah. When our house burned down, we had to move to another village. There my mother was abducted by a very evil laundryman. My father, my brother, and I then left that village to find yet another place to live. As we were traveling along . He then went on to tell their whole life story from beginning to end, and when he had finished, he said, "And this boy is my younger brother, and this woman is my mother."

Looking very carefully at the boys and very carefully at the woman, the padişah now recognized them as his two sons and his wife. He gave orders to some of his men to

Telescoping

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capture the laundryman, who had fled during the older son's account, and throw him into the dark dungeon.

And ever after that, the padişah, his wife, and their two sons lived very happily together.